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LIVING FREE

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LIFE'S A BEACH

In light of events in the Middle East, I've been wondering if there's any defense against a suicide bomber. You could try to avoid ever being in the physical presence of a stranger, but that hermit approach is very limiting.

It occurs to me that there is one place where a terrorist with explosives strapped to his body would be instantly recognized: in the presence of nudists. Where everyone is naked, you can socialize as much as you want with no fear of being harmed by this particular threat. The requirement could be relaxed a little to allow wearing extremely revealing swim suits, but nothing more.

While it seems unlikely that nudity or near nudity will become common in a business or shopping setting or on buses, one place where this could easily be accepted is at the beach. There the rule against indecent exposure would have to be reversed. Bare skin would be okay, but anyone seen on the beach who is over-dressed would be instantly arrested for it, & treated like a leper until the police arrive. Perhaps Israel should adopt Australian beach culture.

ENCOUNTER IN NEW JERSEY by Arthur B. Robinson, PhD

Nine years ago (when the Robinson children were 15, 13, 11, 9, 9, and 4 years old) during a trip to the East, we were scheduled to talk with Professor Merrifield in his laboratory at Rockefeller University and then spend the weekend with him and Mrs. Merrifield at their home in New Jersey. The 7 of us were traveling in a large, 2-seated pickup truck and were dressed in our best clothes in deference to this famous scientist and his very charming wife whom we were privileged to visit.

Unfortunately, 4-year-old Matthew had a cold and was coughing, so we stopped at the pediatric clinic in Tenafly, New Jersey to have him checked before going to the Merrifield's home. It was 5:30 pm and 2 women doctors and 2 nurses were on duty. The other children stayed in the pickup, while Matthew and I visited the clinic.

After a very long wait in an empty waiting room, we were seen by a doctor who, after a remarkably brief examination, pronounced that she thought Matthew had a rare and dangerous bacterial infection -- which could be fatal unless he was immediately hospitalized and given intravenous antibiotics. She also administered a shot of adrenaline to Matthew and p a respirator over his face. She remarked, "He is being brav but he isn't passing much air."

To me, Matthew just looked as though he had a bad cold, but I called our pediatrician in Oregon. He told me that t diagnosed disease did exist, but that it was extremely ra He could not, of course, examine Matthew. So, Matthew and went to the hospital, while the other children visited t Merrifields.

The doctor in Tenafly tried to get us past the admis desk at the hospital without the usual sign-in procedur cause, she said, treatment must begin at once on an eme basis. After an hour of trying to arrange this, howeve were signed in normally. In the room, the on-call phys another woman doctor -- examined Matthew, looked at m said, "I don't know why you are here. You certainly nothing to worry about." Nevertheless, Matthew rece

ordered by the Tenafly doctor -- chest x-rays, an IV antibiotic, and a respirator, as I slept by his bedside. Next morning, I looked up to find a woman standing between Matthew and me who said, "I have some men outside who want to talk with you." I replied, "Have them come in." She refused, and a negotiation developed. The 2 men were armed representatives of the Dept. of Youth and Family Services. It is fortunate that I did not voluntarily leave my son's bedside. They tried very hard to induce me to come outside.

The woman began an interrogation of me, with frequent trips out of the room to talk with the men, who refused to come in. She demanded to see the money in my wallet, to examine my credit cards, to know the cost of our home in Oregon, to know how we obtained the money to pay for it, and lots of other personal data. I could answer there or at the jail -- my choice. Eventually they also went to the Merrifield's home and examined the children. One of the armed men even conducted a lengthy interrogation of Professor Merrifield in a separate room. Later, Professor Merrifield said, "He kept telling me that your children are too quiet. I told him that children learn by example. But he wouldn't believe me."

Next day, with Matthew obviously not ill, I fought with the hospital authorities who would not release him without DYFS approval. DYFS was hoping to run out the weekend, so that various weekday options would open for them. Finally, I reached an agreement to not leave town and to participate in all sorts of meetings. I extracted my son from the hospital and immediately drove out of the state.

Hospital records have an admission code. Matthew's code means "admitted for a reason other than a medical emergency." DYFS records are sealed. We cannot see them. My son was given adrenaline, chest x-rays, IV antibiotics, a respirator, and 2 nights in the hospital -- solely to immobilize us and gain control of us. A clue, which I did not realize at the time, should have been the other children. If the disease were so deadly, why didn't the doctors want to examine them?

It turned out that, as we sat in the waiting room, one of the women from the clinic had noticed the children in the pickup and had asked them to get out and talk with her. Having been taught not to talk with strangers, they refused. She triggered a child abuse "concern" and the other doctors went along. Not reporting potential child abuse is a criminal offense for a health practitioner. They called DYFS, and plans were laid to immobilize us for the weekend.

Your federal tax dollars pay approximately $100,000 for each child seized by a state's child abuse industry -- the social workers, foster care givers, psychiatric examiners, police authorities, and other "saviors of the children." My children were worth over half a million dollars to the state of New Jersey.

The entire 2-hour interrogation of me was devoted to learning our family financial status. They wanted to find out if we were strong enough to fight them -- 3000 miles from home. The records of their actions are sealed by state law -- and they are generally immune from prosecution.

We escaped for only 3 reasons. First, we owned our home and looked financially strong. Second, we were visiting a famous scientist. Third, I lied to them and drove out of the state.

(Dr. Robinson is a Professor of Chemistry, Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, 2251 Dick George Road, Cave Junction OR 97523. I condensed this from an article in FAMILY ALERT, March 2001, Hand of Hope Press, POB 101, Cassadaga NY 14718. FAMILY ALERT had previously reprinted this account from ACCESS TO ENERGY, Dec 2000. A to E is a pro-science, pro-technology, pro-free enterprise monthly newsletter.) END

COMMENTS ON LF 122 BY PAUL DOERR

Anti-modern foundation? Interesting, but a quick read of history shows that aristocrats were as arrogant, evil, depraved, dishonest, vicious, rotten, & wasteful of humans & their welfare as modern politicians.

We could have/ should have been in space 40 years ago, & we had the infrastructure & knowledge. If our elected nobility had done the job they were elected to do. We are not in space because: 1) the money was used to guarantee re-election to the worthless Damcraps, Replicans, liberals, communists, etc. 2) people in space would be out of the direct control of the masters on Earth. Read how difficult it was for the European masters to maintain rule over people in colonies scattered all over the world. Transportation was slow, difficult, & expensive. The entrenched, familiar-with-the-country colonists had enormous advantage over imported troops, even if they just retreated into unending, uncivilized, unpopulated, farmed, unmapped lands. Space would be much more difficult a hidden space-based electro-rail shotgun would eliminate fire armies before they could even land. The masters would control & revenue.

Living in space is simple, inexpensive, easy, efficient if "balanced aquarium" principle is used. I kept a sealed, closed aquarium going for a couple years. The only input is part-time light. I expect ascension to space to be to be kept expensive to keep "common" people out of

Environmental catastrophe? These happen regularly every few hundred thousand or less years. Cave bears, saber-tooth tigers, & mammoths lived together after the environmental disaster that destroyed dinosaurs. This came after several other environmental catastrophes. Mammoth remains have been found with spear points & arrowheads embedded in the bones so men existed before these were destroyed, if, indeed, man did not do the job. Man has been ending the existence of various lifeforms for ages... Species change/ evolve/ die but life continues.

Thermal energy converters work fine in space using the 500 degree temperature range (+250 in sun to -250 in shade) with no atmosphere to interfere.

Hydroponics could feed the present world population if necessary or if agri-myths were dropped & the hills planted to food trees. The Corsican economy & food was based on chestnuts for centuries, probably from Ulysses to the Kaiser. People starve because of lack of innovation, economics and politics. To check it out, follow the money. Any vacant lot contains enough edible & some quite good-tasting "weeds" to feed a family. It has been shown (see Jeavits' Bountiful Ridge in Willits CA among others) that a 35' x 35' plot will feed one person for a year & any gardener can do it.

Hikers should save all their fruit/nut/berry tree/vine etc. seeds & stick them in the ground as they wander the hills. Some would live & bear. If people didn't eat the food, wildlings would. Then eat the wildlings.

→

People living in very low or no-gravity places could not return to earth without extensive attention. Their muscles & lungs change character & they could not survive.

Tunnels into the moon could be bored cheaply & quickly by the tunnel borers such companies as PG&E use to drill water guides for power generation. A 100 foot wide tunnel a couple hundred feet long half-filled with rock dust with sensor-controlled light/heat/breeze could feed the biggest family you could produce. A book written in the 60s, "Where The Winds Sleep," showed that a man 80, if he could get to the moon, could live another 80 years. In the proper community, that could be doubled. Our researchers think man could live to 250 here, within a couple dozen more years. God, in the Christian Bible, says that man's lifespan is 120+ years, here on earth. The Bible mentions men who lived almost 1000 years, here on earth. People in Alaska can grow 5 foot cabbages in long days. With constant light & low gravity??

Daylily flowers, like violets, are edible. Japs use them in salads, etc.

Trees & plants have their own desires. If one kind won't grow in shade, pick a kind that does. Most tree seedlings won't grow in heavy shade. This is intended by nature so they don't live & crowd the adults to death.

Space "mirrors" are thin plastic on light-weight flex frames. They are cheap, easily/quickly replaced & a bullet just punches a small hole. Fire from demolition bombs need oxygen to burn. There is no atmosphere (oxygen) in space, so mirrors cannot be easily burned. A car could carry an entire space mirror. Super-efficiency is not needed. There is lots of sunshine in near orbits. If light failed, TECs could be used & might be preferable. For transmission, if 12v DC isn't efficient, use 24v for 4 times greater efficiency, or 48v for 16 times. Or transmit by glass, cryotransmission, or beam it or change it to AC. Again, there is no atmosphere to degrade power. This is a reason why Luna is better than Mars.

Not enough light? Eliminate another agri-myth & grow low-light plants. Or even no-light plants.

Mars atmosphere is nasty. If I can't live on it, it is nasty. Mars atmosphere isn't toxic?? If I can't drink it, it is nasty. Both are worthless to me.

With hand-carried suitcase & tank-gun fired nuclear weapons, BIG is a sitting duck, BIG anything: city, industry, military base, ship, you name it. And a nuclear bomb is not needed. Just gather radioactive material & pack it around some explosive & you have rendered a very big area uninhabitable. Or just filter it out of a flying airplane. War is becoming very interesting.

Big cities seem to carry their own seeds of degeneration & destruction. Look at any of them. All have "deteriorated" areas & this will continue. The deteriorated areas continu to grow & "deteriorated" persons from these areas attack the "better" areas. This is called crime...

As President, I could pay off the national debt instantly without adding a single dollar to those in circulation. I could reduce crime by, probably, 80%. Want to eliminate illegal narcotics? Grab a few gutter pushers. Question them under torture. As they name names, grab these & do the same to them. You will move up the chain. Execute them as you finish questioning. Follow the money. When you have reached the millionaires, politicians, bureaucrats, etc., you have just about eliminated illegal narcotics.

Finally, why should non-citizens have American constitutional rights or financial help?

COMMENTS FOR PAUL DOERR

Space colonization was not feasible 40 years ago, or even today, because space launches were & still are, too enormously expensive. It costs $10,000/kg to launch mass into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) on the space shuttle, & the cost to launch using Apollo Program technology must have been very much higher. The 1960s space program was "a bridge too far." It was way ahead of the state of technology, so it cd only be done using massive govt subsidy on the scale of a major war. It was undertaken as a battle in the Cold War. It did not provide the basis for civilian space colonization any more than a multi-million dollar fighter jet can be used for civilian transport.

Colonizing America was unlike colonizing space because settlers here cd live off the land. All they needed from the Old Country was transportation to the colonies. A survival kit, ax, knife, firearms, etc. that one person cd carry was a convenience, but not absolutely essential. After being transported, colonists cd survive with no further support at all from Europe. But to colonize space, settlers need not only to be transported themselves, & not only a personal survival kit in addition, they need the Old Country to send them the entire ecosystem that they need to survive. To make a parallel with colonization on Earth, it's like Europe transporting the forests, rivers, the very topsoil itself, etc. to some distant barren rock to set up a colony. To a space colony, in addition, they wd also have to transport the very air the colonists need to breathe, all at a cost of $10,000/kg to LEO, more if to higher orbit. That's a much more costly enterprise than simply sending out colonists to a place that's already habitable in its natural state. Or consider the cost of setting up & maintaining a colony in Antarctica, except Antarctica is easier than outer space because at least it has air to breathe.

Maintaining Earth-govt control of space colonies wd be much easier, not more difficult, than Euro-govt control of American colonies. American colonists cd retreat to the forests & mtns & never be found with the technology then available. But space is transparent, no place to hide. Electro-railguns need mass for ammo, so they cd not be used by orbiting colonies that have no extra mass to launch. Even so, Earth govts cd see these objects coming & wd have time to use missiles, or space warships, to deflect them. And then they cd retaliate by nuking the space colonies. This assumes the colonies are no longer dependent on supplies from Earth for their survival, as they wd be at the beginning, & as Antarctic settlements are now. At that stage, Earth cd simply stop deliveries of food & other essentials to starve them into submission.

Destroying a space mirror wd be easy using an incendiary device that includes oxygen as well as hydrogen or some other fuel, just like rockets that operate in space. Set it off nearby & the mirror wd be vaporized in a ball of flame. Space napalm. The mirror is easy to replace, sure. But also easy t destroy again & again. It can't be defended, so can't be relied upon during wartime.

A closed, recycling space ecosystem is probably possibl but it needs to be developed. It's not now available, not even blueprints. You say you kept a sealed aquarium going a couple years, but did you live sealed up inside it? The has been only one attempt to do it with humans, Biosphere & it failed. We don't yet know in sufficient detail how it. You believe too much in authors of fiction who can all kinds of neat gadgets & systems by punching typewr keys, but actually building them & making them work mi

take engineers many years of work, if it can be done at all. These stories are meant to be just entertaining yarns. They are not science or engineering journals.

Several private enterprisers are attempting to develop lower cost launching systems. If it cd easily be done, one of them wd already have done it. Govts put some obstacles in their way. But they cd easily go offshore if that were the main problem. I'm sure the launch facilities we see in operation today are roughly state of the art & not held back by some vile conspiracy.

Environmental catastrophe: It's one thing to read about past catastrophes while sitting in a comfortable chair, but quite different to live thru one that threatens our survival today. Most of us wd rather avoid that experience. The fundamental problem is the growing human population that threatens to swamp all other creatures on Earth. This has never happened before in the history of the planet that one species has multiplied to such an extent. If we convert all land to cropland & pastures to feed ever increasing numbers of humans, where can all the wild species live? Environmentalists often "cry wolf," & exaggerate for fund-raising purposes, & they have no feasible solution to propose, but there really is a serious problem. The solution seems to be economic development, since rich countries drop to zero or negative population growth, as in Europe & Japan. But don't hold your breath waiting for "greens" to suggest any such thing.

The amount of power you can get out of a Thermal Energy Converter depends on the temperature difference between the hot & cold side. An ocean TEC has to be very large to squeeze anything out of the small 40 degrees F temperature difference which is the most we can get out of Earth's oceans. A Space TEC, as you say, has a 500 degree F range to work with, so it cd be much smaller. Maybe a family-sized TEC wd be a feasible energy source in space. Anyway, this wd be an energy source that a space colony wd surely want to consider.

People called greatest torment during Biosphere 2 experiment

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Forget the roach epidemic and ant invasion. The worst part of the Biosphere 2 experiment was the people, says a former crew member who spent two years in a sealed glass-and-steel dome.

Linda Leigh, a botanist, said the eight-person crew fought over food portions and suffered from cabin fever while locked up in the 3-acre mini-world simulating the Earth's environment.

"Some of us would sometimes hand out portions that were purposely uneven to see if the first people served would take the biggest ones or would try to even it out among the others," Ms. Leigh told the Arizona Republic in a story published Sunday.

"In looking back, I guess it's pretty remarkable all eight of us came out alive."

Ms. Leigh, 44, said she did not sleep well inside the Biosphere and dreamed of sorcerers and volcanoes.

The Biosphere was plagued by roaches and ants that swarmed over workers, she said. It also had insufficient air and produced far less food than projected because of unexpected crop failures.

But the most difficult part remained "dealing with seven other people," which worsened personality conflicts, Ms. Leigh said.

Crew members also had to deal with feeling cooped up during their stay from 1991 to 1993.

"I spent a lot of time just staring outside," said Ms. Leigh, who is working on her doctorate at the University of Florida in Gainesville. "I really wanted to take a long walk."

Another annoyance was people who would pound on the Biosphere's glass panels while visiting the facility near Oracle, about 30 miles northwest of Tucson.

Financed by billionaire Edward Bass of Fort Worth, Texas, Biosphere 2 ultimately came under fire by the scientific community and media. After a management shake-up, two crew members broke seals and opened doors to the complex. They were fired.

The two, Abigail Alling and Mark Van Thillo, later sued for breach of contract and won.

Despite the problems, Ms. Leigh said she feels fortunate to have participated in the historic project and even got married in the Biosphere in December.

from BUFFALO NEWS, 7/29/96
for more on Biosphere 2 see LF95p7 & LF 97p1

I don't agree that a vacant lot contains enough edible plants to feed a family. Wild foods are mostly salad greens & berries. Humans can't live on leaves & berries alone, because they simply don't contain enough calories. The little a family cd get to eat from a patch of weeds wdnt keep them alive for long. We humans need to base our diets on calorie-dense foods such as nuts, seeds, grain, beans, meat, or certain cultivated roots. Also I don't think I cd raise enough food on a 35 foot square plot to keep myself alive for a year even tho I've been growing vegetable gardens for over 40 years.

A 35x35 garden is 1225 square feet. I only have about 400 in a small, partly-shaded backyard, & the soil is thin & rocky, & there's a black walnut tree nearby in a neighbor's yard. Black walnut is harmful to most garden vegies except onions. How much a garden yields will depend on the soil, weather, length of the growing season, experience & skill of the gardener, etc.

Quote: In the Stone Age..."a family in the state of nature, hunting and food gathering over wide areas, not specially favored, needed about a 10-mile radius to live in."
(from "A History of Classical Physics," by J.D. Bernal, p39)
I they wd have obtained most of their calories from meat. A ant lot is pitifully insufficient.

The Methusala lifespans in the Bible are mere fables. Anycan write a book asserting the possibility of 160 year ans. Believe it when it happens.

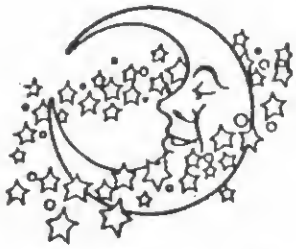
All parts of the common orange daylily are edible. First leaves in spring can be used in salad. Buds & flowers & older leaves can be cooked & eaten. And on the roots you'll find nodules the size of marbles that can be cooked & eaten like little potatoes. Unfortunately, deer will eat your daylilies first unless they're fenced out.

Muscles atrophy under weightless conditions, but exercise helps. That's why astronauts exercise so much. Savage (see LF122p1) discusses this & proposes some solutions. But I wonder if these bodily changes caused by low or no gravity wd be harmful to a person who never returns to a high gravity environment. Also, what wd happen to a person born & raised in zero gravity? It may be that, if humans come to inhabit various space habitats, different human body types will develop, suited to particular local conditions, & these people will be unable to function under different conditions.

Higher voltage DC doesn't cut down resistive losses in the wires. This was demonstrated during the "battle of the currents" when Edison's DC lost out to Tesla's AC. Edison had to build DC powerplants in every neighborhood, while Tesla cd transmit his AC 100s of miles without unacceptable losses.

I believe a lunar electrical system wd be in danger of being burned out by solar flares, whereas Mars' atmosphere & magnetic field, which the moon doesn't have, wd protect a similar system from solar flares. One point for Mars.

You can't get something for nothing. All plant energy (food) comes from solar energy, the more sunlight, the more plant food that can be produced, up to the limit where the plants wd burn up. Low light plants grow slowly, producing less food. No light plants (fungi) use the solar energy →



stored in organic matter that was produced by other plants growing in the sun. You can't get plant food without energy from light any more than you can drive a car without fuel.

I distinguish between merely inert vs. toxic (nasty). If I dive into a body of water, that's inert. I can't breathe water & have to carry a tank of air to breathe. But if I dive into a pool of acid, the air tank won't keep me alive. The acid is toxic. Some planets, like Mars, have atmospheres that are merely inert. You need to carry oxygen to breath, but the atmosphere won't harm you. Other planets have much worse toxic atmospheres that will eat away your skin or poison you. That's a much more dangerous situation.

You raise this point to argue for the superiority of Luna over Mars. But the surface of the moon is hard vacuum. You can't breathe that either. So isn't that nasty & worthless to you? Worse than that, the moon's surface is awash in harmful radiation. The moon's vacuum, unlike Mars, offers no protection against unfiltered solar radiation & cosmic rays, which will slowly poison you, or the more powerful, occasional solar flares, that wd quickly kill you. Outdoors on the moon you have to wear a moonsuit, like a hazmat guy entering a toxic area, & one little tear will kill you. All you need on Mars is a parka against the cold, like in the Antarctic, plus an oxygen mask. But you don't need a moonsuit. Martian atmosphere touching your skin won't harm you. A tear in your clothing wd be no problem, as long as you don't get cold enough to suffer frostbite. It's much like being on top of Mt. Everest. So score another point for the much more benign surface of Mars. But really, I'm in favor of colonizing both the moon & Mars. The one undoubted advantage of the moon is its nearness to Earth.

Drug War: You say grab the pushers & question them. But who grabs & questions? Who guards the guards? The cops are paid off as well. The cops are often using & selling drugs themselves. You say grab, torture, & execute the millionaires, politicians, & bureaucrats, but they're the ones running the show. Their highest priority will be to see that their own asses are covered. The lawmakers & enforcers are thoroughly entangled in the drug prohibition system. Many are users or dealers themselves. For others, the last thing they want is for the drug war to end even in victory because they're making good money with all that lovely asset forfeiture loot, lawyers prosecuting & defending, & plenty of good jobs for the boys. Those who want power most of all can argue for all kinds of increasing govt repression as being needed for the drug war. There are no perfect angels who will wage the good fight without taking care of themselves first. It's impossible to have an effective prohibition of anything that a great many people want to have, whether its heroin, or guns, or anything. Do you think you cd end the private ownership of guns the same way by grabbing, torturing & executing gun owners & sellers?

Why not just let people alone to do as they please unless/until they harm someone else? If they want to rot their own minds & bodies with some nasty stuff, it's just a Darwinian weeding out of the defective. USING drugs harms almost no one except maybe the user. Almost all so-called drug problems are caused by drug prohibition not drug use, & they can be ended by ending prohibition, just like repealing alcohol prohibition ended the lawlessness connected with alcohol. About 1000 people die each year from using any illegal drugs. That's trivial in a population of about 300,000,000, with about 3,000,000 deaths a year from all causes. No one dies from using marijuana. By comparison, about 40,000 a year die in vehicle accidents. So should we outlaw cars? END

LETTER FROM ED REGIS

I was looking forward to building one of those Living Cubes, but it didn't happen. (See LF 83, p3.) 2x2s are no longer available at building supply stores, I checked. 2x3s are available.

I'm looking forward to building a tetrahedron (3-sided pyramid) "storage shed." For Third Worlders this could be a home. 10 foot electrical metal tubing (conduit), 1/4 inch mesh "hardware cloth," pop rivets, hog rings, threaded rod to hold it down, and papercrete.

I wonder how papercrete would work with shredded cloth instead of some of the paper. Or what about some plastic foam "popcorn?"

I just read "Nano, the Emerging Science of Nanotechnology," remaking the world molecule by molecule. Fascinating.

COMMENTS FOR ED REGIS

When I bought those 2x2s many decades ago, I went to a lumber yard & asked for 2x2s, & they sliced 2x4s in half lengthwise on their table saw. Of course, this was an honest-to-God lumberyard, not a "home center" where they will only sell you what they have on the shelf. But 2x3s shd work in a living cube, especially since they are actually smaller than 2 inches by 3 inches anyway. You might need to use slightly longer bolts. Those 2x2s have proved to be just the right size for all kinds of jobs around the house. I keep reusing pieces of them all the time.

Will electrical conduit be strong enough for 10 foot on edge pyramid sides? It seems to me that it might be too light, might buckle under the weight. Tell us how it works out if you do try it.

Are you planning to cover an entire 10 foot tetrahedron with hardware cloth? I believe that's rather expensive. Have you priced it? If it's just to support the papercrete, a cheaper solution that might work wd be to use 1 inch chicken wire. I don't know what "hog rings" are.

I tried to make lighter concrete once by adding plastic foam "popcorn" that comes in packages I get in the mail. It didn't work. The plastic is so light it floats to the top of the wet concrete & won't stay mixed in. Then I tried replacing half of the sand with vermiculite. That worked fine. Made blocks about 11% lighter than all sand concrete. But you can't get vermiculite free; you have to buy it at a garden center. It's used in potting soil mixes. Perlite is similar. But I haven't tried it in concrete.

Something else that worked for me is spreading a thin layer of concrete, actually mortar mix, on a sheet of styrofoam. It sticks very well & doesn't fall off. You cd cover all sides of a block of styrofoam with concrete & it wd look like a block of concrete, but weigh much less. Not load-bearing, of course. But you cd use it to in-fill the walls of post & beam construction. Or maybe find some other uses. Maybe glue styrofoam panels to outside walls then trowel on mortar mix to make it more durable & waterproof. But I havent tried that myself. END

Questions about
Water sources and wells, from Chuck Z.

Over the last 2 years I've looked at many land / home sale magazines for northern PA. sites. I've seen "perc-approved" in some land ads. From books I've read that would mean that the soil has good drainage for an on-site septic system. Does that also mean the land is approved for a drilled well ? In the coming years I hope to build a log home (in kit form) somewhere in upstate PA. where property taxes are low, as a perm. home. I plan to avoid "rocky land" to keep drilling cost down. I'm wondering what $ amt. to set aside for drilling (by a pro) , pipe-line, and small pump set-up ? Generally I'm a low consumer of water. My ave. bill is $11 for 2 months, for city water.

In my log home kit research Lok-n-Logs has an economical "Sportsman series" of 300-900 sq.ft. cabins costing $15K to 27K , coming from Sherburne,NY. The 6 inch "keyed" logs are borate treated to resist insects. Hiring an erector to set up the walls and roof beams is wise to exp. construction during ideal weather.

The Star-plate cabin vs. other bldgs.

For one-man cstr., you did very well with the Star-plates and lumber. Pressure treated plywood for wall sheathing would be best, tho its more $.
Those steel framing plates sold by Northern, for a no angle-cut gable roof shed look ideal, for $40. Two kits make a 8X14 ft. bldg. 2x4's are used with these plates.
I came across a "Simple-Life" book (M.E.News) (1981) that has plans for a stacked 2x4 (walled) house. 3.5 inch walls sound cozy. I wonder what that house in the book looks like after 20 years!

Chuck Z. pob 1293, Bensalem,PA. 19020 .

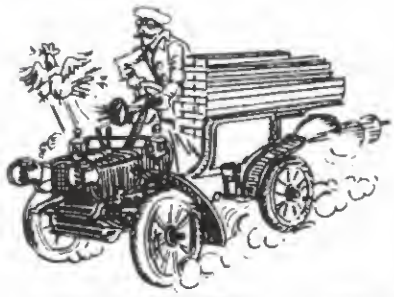
COMMENTS FOR CHUCK Z.

I don't know the answers to your questions, but maybe someone reading this might know.

I've never had a yen for a log cabin myself. I prefer building with stone & concrete, natural field stone, not dressed stone. I saw a series of programs about building a log home on "Hometime" on PBS. They said that log construction always settles, so everything that's attached to the logs has to be put on with bolts sliding in slots so the settling logs won't pull it down. This greatly complicates construction.

This series is available on video. Must-see for anyone who wants to build a log home I wd think. On the Internet, check out "Building a Log Home" on "Hometime" at pbs.org. Or phone 1-800-531-5599 for information about how to get this video of the log home project.

In building my cabin, I did use stone & concrete for the foundation. But it took me a year just to do that working the few days I cd devote to it. I built the rest out of wood so I cd get a completed structure up fast. But I hope to eventually add stone walls. The wood is just temporary, giving me a cabin to live in while I continue construction. Except I'm now working a full-time job, 1st time I've done that since the 1970s, & I have no time to work on my cabin. But I hope to retire in about 5 years. Then I'll have plenty of time. I can only wait & see & hope that I'll still be fit enough then to be able to do heavy work.



LETTER FROM GEORGE P.

Comment on *LF* 123:

I am not surprised that John Boardman traces libertarianism back to alleged roots in white racism. He has long been expert in finding discreditable—and far-fetched—motives for those who disagree with him, as I well remember from his arguments in the late Ted Pauls' fanzine *Kipple* back around 1970. Apparently some things don't change.

As the editor notes, modern libertarianism is more accurately traced to such figures as Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand. Apart from them, I was particularly impressed by *The Machinery of Freedom*, by David Friedman (Milton's son), *circa* 1973. While I am sympathetic to many libertarian positions, I have yet to find satisfactory libertarian answers to the problems of dealing with powerful aggressors. However, that's too big a subject to get into now. I'll just note that limited government, small government, and weak government are by no means the same things. I am for limited government.

On a different subject, Boardman implies that using a gun to fight airliner hijackers is impractical because "the bullets are quite likely to pierce the walls of the cabin [depressurizing the plane]." So they might, but is that bad? When the cabin loses pressure, oxygen masks drop down and everybody must grab one. That immobilizes the hijackers along with everyone else. To be sure, they could bring portable oxygen bottles and masks, but that would raise extreme suspicion at the security checkpoint. And a cockpit crew with personal oxygen bottles might more easily subdue hijackers after depressurization. They might even deliberately depressurize to thwart a hijacking.

It has been suggested elsewhere that the danger of airliner hijackings means that we should beef up Amtrak and travel more by railroad. No, I don't think so. Railroads are actually more vulnerable to terrorism than airlines. With planes, you have to guard the airports and screen the passengers. With railroads, you would also have to guard every foot of the thousands of miles of track. Otherwise, think how easy it would be to plant bombs just about anywhere to blow up the track as a crowded train passes over. It wouldn't be as spectacular as ramming airliners into buildings, but since the terrorists wouldn't have to commit suicide, they could wreck a lot of trains and kill a hell of a lot of people at very low cost to themselves.

Which reminds me: If I wanted to disrupt electricity supply, I wouldn't bother to attack well-defended nuclear power plants. No, I would blow up the railroad tracks under the hundred-car trains bringing coal to the conventional plants.

COMMENTS FOR GEORGE P.

At least terrorists wouldn't be able to hijack a train & crash it into a target like the Pentagon.

The reason for targeting a nuke power plant isnt to disrupt the electricity supply, but rather to spread radio-active material over a wide area & make it uninhabitable, like the region of the Ukraine near Chernobyl. I don't think blowing up a coal train wd disrupt the supply of electricity at all because power plants & distribution systems are all tied together into a grid. If one or a few power plants go off-line, other sources of power wd kick in to make up for them. The single strike that wd do most damage to the supply →

of electricity wd probably be knocking out a distribution station. Or terrorists cd more easily blow up a tower carrying a high tension line. But any of these actions wd likely cause only a local & temporary outage that wd soon be repaired.

Thinking of natural disasters, what disrupts electricity the most are ice storms that pull down power lines over a wide area. It wd be hard for terrorists to duplicate something like that.

Just yesterday I saw on "This Old House" on PBS that affluent homeowners in New England who upgrade their electrical systems commonly add a backup generator that kicks in automatically if the power goes out. It runs on propane stored on the property. I suppose it cd also run on natural gas. Costs about $10,000 to install.

LETTER FROM JAMES H. (Jan 02)

Why are those such as ourselves who never fly anywhere so concerned about airline security? The pre-clearance idea might be great for frequent fliers, but it would mean putting our personal data in still another computer system. Nobody should tolerate that. No amount of deterrence can stop people willing to sacrifice themselves in order to bring down a plane. We just have to accept some probability of that.

For people who really care, there are unbreakable codes. You've described several yourself. A lot of govt eavesdropping could be stopped, or frustrated, simply by speaking foreign languages. That would mean that people fluent in "our" language would have to be assigned to monitor all of our calls. They can do all the Carnivore and Magic Lantern they want to, and the message would be secure. Especially if the foreign language itself is then filled with code words or encrypted.

I'll get my caffeine from soft drinks, thanks, not from coffee.

The best idea I've seen about airline safety is to allow no baggage at all on people flights, and to send baggage on freighters. You and your bags would never arrive together, but you'd be safer.

Crazy weather, no? It was over 70 here today (in Jan). The drought is still with us, wells and springs going dry. We could use all of your lake-effect snow.

EDITOR'S NOTE for James H: I'm holding over the rest of your long letter until next issue because there's not enough room for it here.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

TINY RADIO ID TAGS FOR JUST PENNIES

SEMICONDUCTOR EXPERTS have long predicted that microchips will one day replace everything from bar codes on commercial products to anti-counterfeiting watermarks on paper currency. That day is drawing closer, thanks to a joint research project at the University of Pittsburgh and Oregon State University that has pioneered a new form of radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags—silicon chips a few millimeters in diameter, that can transmit data to a receiver. Dubbed product emitting numbering identification (PENI) tags, they are cheaper to make than traditional RFID tags.

At retail outlets, PENI chips would eliminate the need for clerks to physically scan bar codes. The tags would automatically broadcast the price to any nearby electronic receiver chips, along with info on shelf life and other desired tidbits. The tags could also provide homing signals so lost cell phones and other gadgets could be tracked. They could even be built into medical products, such as syringes, so there are never questions as to the contents.

Typically, today's RFID tags consist of a chip attached to a minuscule radio, with the chip recording data and the radio transmitting it. The two are mounted on the same piece of paper or plastic and cost 30¢ to 50¢ apiece. Sounds cheap enough, but that price is prohibitive for most retail applications. With the newer PENI tags, the radio is embedded directly on the chip, driving the price down to about 12¢ each for a small batch—or a penny in volumes of hundreds of millions. "We've had the technology to do this for a while. It has just been a matter of getting the cost down to make it viable," says Marlin H. Mickle, a professor at Pitt's School of Engineering.

Darnell Little

COMMENTS ON RFIDs

This upbeat item was published in the leftish BUSINESS WEEK, 3/18/02. R.W. Bradford takes a more sinister view in "The Death of Cash," in LIBERTY, Apr 02. He reports that if RFIDs cd be made a little cheaper, smaller, & more durable, the European Central Bank wants to put one in every Euro banknote. Then every cash transaction cd be monitored. Whenever you spend money, the transaction wd be recorded by the merchant & reported to the authorities. It wd be the end of anonymous cash transactions. RFIDs can be read by "interrogators" up to 3 feet away. So I suppose thieves, whether in or out of govt, cd make your money talk to them & reveal its presence no matter where it's hidden on your body. So far US monetary authorities have not shown any interest in RFIDs. But if they follow the Europeans' lead, we shd expect as little public outcry as we see in other recent invasions of liberty.

LETTER FROM DR. MICHAEL T.

I liked your Self Liberation Notes #2. The article on alternative sources of power interested me because I've been living off the grid for several years in the mountains about an hour outside of Las Vegas.

There are about 60 houses in Cold Creek Canyon, and all of us make our own electricity. Here's my take on the various systems I see employed by my neighbors:

- Wind generators seem to be more trouble than they are worth. The guy next door is always tinkering with his, and he had to do a lot of after market work to boot. They're expensive and noisy—like a hard rock version of the effect when you clipped a playing card so it would rub against the spokes of your bicycle when you were a kid.

- Some folk use diesel generators. They suck fuel at a minimum of ½ gallon per hour, and most of the power, unless it is stored in batteries, winds up being unused. The China diesel is the most popular.

- Solar power is fairly popular, but it's still expensive and the cells have a finite life. To be effective, the set-up should swivel so the panels can be turned towards the sun once or twice a day. The most ingenious outfit I've seen was put together by a friend who mounted the panels on a discarded satellite dish.

- Most of my neighbors run gasoline generators, but these are 3000-5000 watt, which is much more than is needed to run a television and some lights. Typically, a generator like this will suck gasoline at a rate of up to one gallon per hour.

- No one here uses a car engine just to run a 60 amp alternator and an inverter. However, some do employ a car alternator and a 5-hp gasoline engine to charge a bank of batteries. Then they use an inverter to convert the electricity to house current. That's economical and practical, if you can pick up the deep cycle batteries reasonably.

I went through all sorts of gyrations from the time I bought my place in 1996. I finally did this:

1. Got rid of most of the current drawing appliances—e.g., microwaves, electric coffee maker, etc. (The refrigerator that came with the house is a propane burning Servel, and it's more than adequate.)

2. Switched to a 1000 watt Honda generator ($700.00) and had it jetted for high altitude. It sips less than 1/5th of a gallon per hour under normal loads—e.g., a few lights, a TV and VCR, an occasional vacuum cleaner. (I have minor service performed twice a year, change the plugs myself, and always run synthetic oil, which I change every ten days or so. I've used this generator daily for four years, and it's quiet, too.

3. I use an old Onan 2500 watt gasoline generator once a week to do laundry and run the clothes dryer. (All the solar and wind generator folk do the same, since it's impractical to run any serious electric motors or heavy-drawing appliances from batteries. Even my friend who has 40 batteries still runs his generator. A gallon of gas will wash and dry a load or two of laundry for me.

4. I have a CD/Tape/AM-FM radio that I use about six or eight hours a day. I've rigged it to run off a single 12 volt car battery, that I recharge off my generator every 10 days or so.

I think my 1000-watt generator is overkill. When it dies, I may replace something in the 700-watt range. It will be quieter and even more economical.

As things stand now, I burn about ½ gallon of gas a day. Even figuring in the use of the larger generator and maintenance, my electricity bill is under $40 per month. I heat with a mixture of propane and wood. With the gas refrigerator, hot water heater, and stove, I probably go through 300 gallons of propane per year, which works out to less than $60 per month. My utilities for a 2000 square foot house are thus $100 per month.

I'm 45 minutes and a whole world away from downtown Las Vegas. I get four-season weather. There are elk, mule deer, wild horses, and eagles outside my back door.

It seldom gets above 85 degrees, but the temperature does drop to zero in January. I'll take that over the 110+ degree weather in the Las Vegas Valley any time.

The nearest power is 14 miles away, so it will be a long time before Nevada Power comes to the top of the mountain. I think that—eventually—technology will make flip-of-the-switch living affordable for us folk who like to live remote. In the meantime, I'll just experiment with different set-up, striking a balance between convenience and economy.

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